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Security Council

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Report of the Security Council mission to Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone, 18 to 24 May 2012

I. Introduction

1. In his letter dated 18 May 2012 (S/2012/344), the President of the Security Council informed the Secretary-General that the members of the Council had agreed to send a mission to Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and Sierra Leone from 18 to 24 May 2012. The Liberia segment of the mission was co-led by Ambassador Susan Rice of the United States of America and Ambassador Mohammed Loulichki of Morocco. The Côte d'Ivoire and ECOWAS segment of the mission was co-led by Ambassador Gérard Araud of France and Ambassador Kodjo Menan of Togo. The Sierra Leone segment of the mission was co-led by Ambassador Mark Lyall Grant of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Ambassador Baso Sangqu of South Africa. The terms of reference of the mission are set out in the annex to document S/2012/344. The composition of the mission is set out below:

Ambassador Agshin Mehdiyev (Azerbaijan)

Counsellor Tian Lin (China)

Ambassador Néstor Osorio (Colombia)

Ambassador Gérard Araud (France)

Ambassador Peter Wittig (Germany)

Ambassador Gert Rosenthal (Guatemala)

Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri (India)

Ambassador Mohammed Loulichki (Morocco)

Ambassador Raza Bashir Tarar (Pakistan)

Ambassador João Cabral (Portugal)

Ambassador Nikita Zhukov (Russian Federation)

Ambassador Baso Sangqu (South Africa)

Ambassador Kodjo Menan (Togo)

Ambassador Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom)

Ambassador Susan Rice (United States)

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2. The present report of the Security Council mission to West Africa from 18 to 24 May 2012 has three sections, covering the Council's visits to Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone. The present report follows the briefing to the Council by the respective heads of the Security Council mission to West Africa on 31 May 2012.

II. Liberia

A. Background and context

3. Since the Council's last visit to Liberia in May 2009, significant progress has been made in that country, taking into account the devastation caused by the civil war that ended in 2003. With the generally peaceful conduct of the 2011 elections — the second elections since the end of the war — Liberia passed a critical milestone, which was cemented with the inauguration of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf on 16 January 2012.

4. Liberia no longer faces direct internal or external military threats, but latent security threats from within the country, including civil unrest, could undermine its stability. In pockets of the country, particularly the border areas, former combatants, some of whom are armed, maintain command-and-control structures that have been mobilized during and since the 2011 Ivorian crisis. A major threat emanates from the large population of unskilled, unemployed youths, many of them former combatants lacking livelihood opportunities, while long-standing divisions on the basis of ethnicity, politics and religion as well as land disputes are another source of tension. The root causes of the country's conflict have yet to be fully addressed, including a divided society, economic inequality, corruption, nepotism, impunity, political exclusion and marginalization of certain groups and communities, human rights violations and fragile State institutions. Meanwhile, insufficient progress has been made with respect to national reconciliation.

5. Liberia continues to be affected by the situation in the subregion and there remains a need for the development of national and regional capacities and strategies to respond to subregional threats to peace and security, including drug and weapons trafficking and illegal exploitation of natural resources. Cross-border movements of armed elements, including former combatants from Côte d'Ivoire, are a significant threat, and the continuing presence of some 65,000 refugees, out of some 190,000 Ivorian refugees who had entered Liberia during the post-elections crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, presents challenges for the Government and strains host communities.

6. The United Nations technical assessment mission of February 2012 assessed multiple issues and, while balancing the institutional progress made so far with the need to ensure a steady state of security, made a range of findings related to the future of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), including its reconfiguration, which were reflected in the recommendations contained in the special report of the Secretary-General on UNMIL of 16 April 2012 (S/2012/230).

B. Security Council mission

7. The Security Council visited Liberia on 19 and 20 May 2012, and also visited Zwedru in Grand Gedeh County, eastern Liberia, on 22 May.

8. The Security Council's visit aimed to reaffirm its continuing support for the Government and people of Liberia; and to express support for UNMIL and to review progress in the implementation of its mandate and assess the modalities for its reconfiguration in the light of the Secretary-General's special report on UNMIL of 16 April 2012. Members of the Council sought to assess the operational capacity and sustainability of the Liberia National Police and other national security institutions and the progress made in determining the appropriate role for the Armed Forces of Liberia; to encourage the Government to decentralize functions of national security institutions beyond Monrovia; and to develop the justice and corrections sectors, taking into account the reconfiguration of UNMIL. The Council also aimed to encourage the efforts of the Government to promote national reconciliation, combat corruption and promote good governance, while addressing political divisions and ensuring inclusiveness. Furthermore, the Council sought to assess security challenges along the Ivorian border; to assess and encourage inter-mission cooperation between the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and UNMIL; to focus on illicit weapons flows in the region and explore strengthening regional cooperation; and to emphasize the importance of protecting human rights and combating sexual and gender-based violence. The Council also sought to assess the performance of the Peacebuilding Commission and to underline the need for the full implementation of the Security Council's sanctions regime on Liberia.

9. The Security Council mission met with President Johnson Sirleaf and members of her Cabinet, including Ministers of Finance, Foreign Affairs, Internal Affairs, Information, National Defence, Justice, Gender and Development, as well as the National Security Adviser. The members of the mission also visited the National Police Training Academy where the Minister of Justice and heads of Liberian security agencies briefed them. The mission met with representatives of civilian society; paid a visit to a workshop conducted by the quick-impact project, "Alternative livelihoods project for traditional women" at Kortu Town; met with the management of the Firestone Corporation; and was briefed by the senior leadership of UNMIL and the United Nations country team.

Meeting with the President and members of her Cabinet

10. At the meeting on 19 May, the President noted continued progress in socioeconomic recovery and peace consolidation since the Council's last visit in 2009, praising the strong partnership between the Government and UNMIL. She stated that the annual economic growth was 6.5 per cent, despite the global economic crisis. Liberia achieved the completion point of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative in June 2010, which allowed for some $5 billion of the country's debt to be written off. Adding that the Government was working on mobilizing private investment, adjusting legislation, formulating strategies and improving governance, she emphasized that some progress has been made in restoring infrastructure, including building new schools and hospitals as well as repairing roads and bridges.

11. The President stressed that, although important strides had been made in recent years, the coming five years would be even more important as they would mark the implementation of a long-term transformational agenda aimed at making Liberia a middle-income country, namely, "Liberia Rising: Vision 2030". She noted that the Government's priorities included enhancing security and rule of law institutions, pursuing economic and human development, promoting good governance, and modernizing public institutions. The President identified youth education and employment, reform of the rule of law and the security sector to ensure access to equitable justice, infrastructure development, and ensuring an inclusive reconciliation process as key challenges, while highlighting the importance of the role of UNMIL in maintaining an environment conducive to peace consolidation.

12. The President expressed concern that Liberia could be further affected by spillover from potential instability in the subregion, adding that the elections in Guinea and Sierra Leone scheduled for 2012 needed to be carefully monitored. She further added that Liberia maintained excellent cooperation with its neighbours in the framework of both the Mano River Union and ECOWAS, and actively assisted the latter's efforts to address the crises in Mali and Guinea-Bissau.

13. In responding to questions from the Security Council members, the President stated that the Government was fully committed to national reconciliation, while stressing that the Independent National Commission on Human Rights continued to be in the lead for the implementation of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. She acknowledged that corruption continued to be a serious problem. According to the President, fighting corruption should include both prevention and punishment by improving systems of control in Government institutions, further refining administrative structures, introducing new laws, and building the capacity of the judiciary. She expressed hope that a new generation of young people would work for the Government to bring the necessary fresh mindset to successfully eradicating corruption. She stated that the Government had extended the moratorium on sales of publicly-owned land to prevent abuse. The land-generated disputes were a serious problem, which were compounded by territorial disputes among the various counties, which the Government had to address.

14. The President stressed that her Government had always complied with the sanctions regime. She noted, however, that some of the individuals on the travel ban list no longer presented a threat, and suggested that the Council consider delisting them. The President also acknowledged that the asset freeze was not implemented in Liberia owing to legal difficulties, including the need to respect the right to due process.

15. Finally, the President confirmed that the Government had accepted the recommendations of the Secretary-General on the gradual reconfiguration of UNMIL, and would work closely with the Mission in order to build Liberia's capacity in the rule of law and security sectors. She called for greater international support for Liberia's police in line with the expected drawdown of UNMIL troops. She also noted that the professionalism of the national police was sometimes lacking and more efforts should be invested to improve police force training, while increasing its strength. The President referred to Sierra Leone, which has approximately 12,000 police personnel, compared to some 4,000 in Liberia. She underlined the challenge of the multinational assistance provided to the police through the UNMIL police component, given different standards and methodologies,

and noted that Liberia would explore the possibility of a lead nation to support the Liberian police.

16. At the same meeting, the Minister for Finance and Economic Planning noted that the implementation of "Liberia Rising: Vision 2030" would address, inter alia, such important issues as land ownership, citizenship, national identity and reconciliation. The Minister said that the Government intended to spend some $50 million over the next three years for youth-related projects, as over 60 per cent of Liberians younger than 25 years old are unemployed. He stated that the Government planned to provide funding for the five regional justice and security hubs being built with the assistance of the Peacebuilding Commission. The President stressed that the hubs were an integral part of the security transition from UNMIL to national authorities, adding that the Government was committed to strictly adhering to the construction schedule and the deployment of police and judiciary personnel in the hubs.

17. The Minister of Justice echoed the importance of the justice and security hubs, which would allow the Government to significantly expand its capacity to provide justice and security services to the population beyond Monrovia in a decentralized manner. The Minister also said that the Drug Enforcement Agency faced new challenges in dealing with drug and other illicit trafficking, adding that the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization was working to enhance its control over State borders. Serious concern was also expressed with regard to the presence of armed former combatants in eastern Liberia. The Minister of Justice also stressed judicial reform and efforts to reduce the high number of pretrial detentions, including by using alternative community-based approaches. She hoped that construction of a new central prison in Monrovia would alleviate the serious overcrowding in penitentiary facilities.

18. The Minister of Defence praised the work of the Government and UNMIL in preparing for the hand-over of security responsibilities from UNMIL to national authorities. However, he advised that the Government would need to provide some $72 million over the next three years to fill critical gaps identified in the security sector. He thanked the United States for its important contribution and leadership in the establishment of the armed forces of Liberia and expressed appreciation to ECOWAS countries, particularly Nigeria and Ghana, which provided officers to help train the armed forces. The Minister said that, although their size was modest, the armed forces could deploy in the border areas of the country and could also be used to help repair infrastructure such as bridges and roads. With regard to questions concerning the high rate of attrition in the armed forces, the President explained that initially the military barracks were built for soldiers without families but that the military personnel had been allowed to bring their families, which had led to overcrowding and deterioration in their living conditions. She advised that additional financial allocations from the State budget would be provided to improve their living conditions and welfare.

19. Members of the Security Council mission commended the progress made since the end of the conflict and stressed the importance of further advances in the reform of the rule of law, the security sector, national reconciliation, political inclusiveness, and extension of State authority throughout the country, while addressing urgent socioeconomic priorities, including fighting corruption, as well as the situation of youth and gender mainstreaming.

Meeting with the Minister of Justice and heads of national security institutions

20. While at the National Police Academy, the mission met with the Minister of Justice, as well as the heads of the Liberia National Police, the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization and the Drug Enforcement Agency. The Minister of Justice described Liberia's preparations for the gradual drawdown of UNMIL and requested continued coordination with UNMIL to ensure a smooth transition. She reiterated that the justice and security hubs were an integral component of the Government's plan for transition.

21. The heads of Liberia's security institutions noted that the performance and operations of the rule of law and security agencies were constrained by many shortages, including in transportation, communications, accommodation, and other logistical challenges. It was emphasized that, to enable it to become an effective security provider, the strength of the Liberian police needed to be doubled, to about 8,000 police officers. The Minister of Justice acknowledged the need for increased financial support for the security sector. In connection with the support for the national police, the Minister of Justice echoed the President, saying that Liberia would consider seeking the possibility of a lead nation to support the police.

22. New threats to Liberia's stability from drug trafficking, organized crime, money laundering and piracy in the Gulf of Guinea were highlighted as challenges, which Government security institutions could not address on their own and for which they needed international assistance, including from UNMIL. Liberia's participation in the West Africa Coast Initiative and the recent establishment of the Transnational Crime Unit were highlighted as positive steps.

Meeting with civil society, including visit to Kortu Town

23. The Security Council meeting with some 30 representatives of civil society focused on the obstacles to lasting national reconciliation. Civil society representatives expressed appreciation for the efforts of UNMIL to stabilize the country and expressed concern about the Mission's reconfiguration, stressing that many Liberians felt that the peace was still very fragile, while the national capacity to provide security needed more time to become self-sustainable. They called for the continued presence of UNMIL in Liberia. Civil society representatives also expressed concern at continuing economic disparities and corruption. In connection with the recent verdict of the Special Court for Sierra Leone regarding the former President of Liberia, Charles Taylor, some opined that those who had committed atrocities during the conflict should be prosecuted for their actions in Liberia, as had occurred in Sierra Leone and Rwanda, otherwise impunity might lead to the recurrence of abuses. They also pressed for increasing the role and voice of women in government and for enhanced interreligious dialogue.

24. The Security Council mission visited an UNMIL quick-impact project in Kortu Town near Monrovia, which funded an alternative livelihood project for traditional women, focusing on training in fabric and soap processing and basic tailoring. Members of the women's group explained that the project provided opportunities for alternative income generation as opposed to continuing the harmful practice of female genital mutilation upon girls and women. The women's group stressed that the project helped to change public perceptions of and assisted the entire community in addressing issues that were initially thought too sensitive for discussion.

Meeting with a representative of the business community

25. The Security Council mission visited the headquarters of the Firestone Natural Rubber Company, a subsidiary of the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company, which operates the largest contiguous rubber plantation in the world and is one of Liberia's top employers. The mission discussed the opportunities and challenges facing the business community in Liberia with the company's management, which stated that the presence of UNMIL had greatly contributed to establishing stability and consolidating peace, which were essential for successful operations.

Briefing by UNMIL and the country team on the security situation and United Nations priorities

26. The Security Council mission met with the senior leadership of UNMIL and the United Nations country team, hosted by the Indian all-female formed police unit, which demonstrated the value of women's participation in Liberia's security institutions. UNMIL confirmed to the mission that the post-elections crisis in Côte d'Ivoire presented a critical challenge to Liberia, as tens of thousands of Ivorian refugees who remained in Liberia were putting pressure on already fragile subsistence communities. There were also serious concerns about the presence of weapons in the border areas and the unknown intentions of former combatants. UNMIL advised that inter-mission cooperation between UNMIL and UNOCI had been stepped up in order to provide enhanced stability and support for national authorities in the border areas.

27. UNMIL advised that it was implementing a holistic approach to justice and security through the integration of justice, police, corrections and human rights in the UNMIL rule of law pillar, and through developing, in close cooperation with the Government, a three-year Joint Programme on Justice and Security, building upon the Liberia Peacebuilding Programme, which coherently captures rule of law and security priorities. The Joint Programme brought together the Government, the United Nations, donors and civil society in its management structures and was supported by a multi-donor Justice and Security Trust Fund and the Peacebuilding Fund.

28. The UNMIL leadership expressed concern about the limited size and capacity of the Liberia national police, including the armed Emergency Response Unit and the Police Support Unit, and stressed that it would need to provide further assistance to the police, which many believed would need to double its size. While the national police and, to a lesser extent, the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization have established a minimal presence throughout the country, in instances of serious violence the Liberian security agencies still rely on UNMIL for support.

29. At the same time, the judicial sector experienced a severe lack of capacity, which led, inter alia, to a backlog of cases, an unacceptable level of pretrial detention and serious overcrowding in some prisons. Owing to the lack of access to and confidence in the formal justice system, the population continued to seek assistance from the informal justice system to resolve disputes, particularly in the provinces.

30. The United Nations leadership stressed that sexual and gender-based violence was a daunting challenge, and that domestic violence was common and female genital mutilation was widely practised. Liberia's human rights situation was

complicated by a number of discriminatory laws, which have been identified by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as being associated with the root causes of the conflict.

C. Recommendations

31. Taking into account the views expressed by the mission's interlocutors and conclusions drawn from the various exchanges, the members of the Council recommend:

(a) UNMIL should continue to strive to meet the strategic goal set by the Security Council, namely, to assist Liberia to achieve a steady state of security with national security institutions that are able to sustain stability independently of the peacekeeping mission, while maintaining the strong partnership between the United Nations and the Government and people of Liberia;

(b) The reconfiguration of UNMIL should proceed in a gradual manner, with reductions in the Mission strength commensurate with the building of national capacity, allowing for the assumption of security responsibilities by the national authorities. In this regard, the Government is encouraged to redouble its efforts to build strong, professional and responsible rule of law and security agencies, underpinned by increased funding and effective oversight mechanisms. The Government is also invited to continue exploring bilateral or regional support arrangements in preparation for further stages in the UNMIL reconfiguration. Donors should increase assistance aimed at enhancing the Liberian rule of law and security sectors;

(c) Transition should take into account broader challenges that go beyond security institutions, including governance and the rule of law, which are necessary to sustain the security transition. The Government, the United Nations and multilateral and bilateral partners are encouraged to address those challenges drawing on the important mechanisms already in place, such as the Joint Programme on Justice and Security, including the Liberia Peacebuilding Programme;

(d) The Government should redouble its efforts to combat sexual and gender-based violence;

(e) As Liberia's stability depends on the situation in the subregion, which remains a matter of concern, initiatives fostered in the context of the Mano River Union and ECOWAS aimed at strengthening subregional stability are encouraged.

III. Côte d'Ivoire

A. Background and context

32. The Security Council mission was conducted one year after the end of the violent post-elections crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, which cost at least 3,000 lives. Since then, the Government has made substantial progress in stabilizing the security situation, including by reconstituting and redeploying the security and rule of law institutions; taking first steps towards reconciliation; and accelerating economic recovery and reconstruction. This progress notwithstanding, significant challenges

remain as the crisis exacerbated existing problems and created new ones, as a result of the disintegration of the security apparatus, the collapse of State authority, the creation of the new armed forces (Forces républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI)) followed by ad hoc recruitment, the involvement of militias and foreign combatants in the crisis, the proliferation of weapons and the presence of key representatives of the former regime exiled in countries in the subregion. The proliferation of weapons and slow progress in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration have contributed to a higher incidence of violent crimes throughout the country, such as armed robberies, looting and racketeering, including by the armed forces and other armed elements.

33. Efforts by the Government to address immediate security challenges with the support of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire improved the security situation in parts of the country, particularly in Abidjan. However, the situation in the west remains volatile. This region was the most affected by the recent crisis and is an area where State authority has been traditionally weak and access to basic services limited. The return of displaced persons and refugees has exacerbated existing tensions and resulted in an increasing number of clashes between communities, mostly as a result of land disputes. Continuing cross-border movements of armed elements and weapons and illicit trafficking in the border area between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia present a significant threat for both countries. Several violent attacks by unidentified armed elements on villages in the densely forested border area have been reported since the end of the crisis, with reports that some attacks were carried out by armed elements which entered Côte d'Ivoire from Liberia.

34. The armed forces created by the President, Alassane Ouattara, are composed of the former Forces de défense et de sécurité and the Forces nouvelles. In spite of measures taken by the Government to address shortcomings within the armed forces, the latter grapple with command and control issues, ill-discipline and lack of cohesion. The future of tens of thousands of elements associated with the armed forces who were recruited on an ad hoc basis during the crisis remains uncertain. Many of them will have to undergo disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Estimates of the total caseload range from 60,000 to over 100,000 former combatants. Although the President has taken security sector reform under his purview and a national working group on security sector reform was established on 6 April, progress has been slow in moving these critical processes forward.

35. On the political front, legislative elections, the first since 2000, were successfully conducted in December 2011, although boycotted by the former ruling Front populaire ivoirien (FPI) party, and the National Assembly was inaugurated on 25 April. President Ouattara also established a Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Prime Minister chaired a meeting with extra-parliamentary opposition parties on 27 and 28 March in Grand-Bassam to discuss their grievances, and a permanent framework for dialogue was subsequently established to continue this political dialogue. On several occasions, the Government has reiterated its intention to hold local elections by the end of 2012, though the date has yet to be determined.

B. Security Council mission

36. The Security Council mission visited Côte d'Ivoire on 21 and 22 May, including Guiglo in western Côte d'Ivoire. The mission also paid a visit to Zwedru in eastern Liberia to meet with Ivorian refugees on 22 May. This was the first mission of the Security Council to Côte d'Ivoire since 2008.

37. One of the key objectives of the Security Council's mission to Côte d'Ivoire was to welcome the progress towards restoring stability and peace since the end of the post-elections crisis and to reaffirm the Council's continuing support. The Council also sought to assess the progress made by the Government with the assistance of UNOCI in stabilizing the security situation in Abidjan and the rest of the country, in particular the border area between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, and to encourage inter-mission cooperation between UNOCI and UNMIL. In addition, the Council sought to assess progress made in security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, while encouraging the Government to develop and implement a comprehensive national security sector reform plan and to encourage UNOCI and the United Nations country team to assist in this regard. Further to the successful holding of legislative elections, the Council sought to encourage the Government to continue reaching out to the political opposition and to encourage political parties to engage constructively in political life, while calling on the Government and all Ivorian actors to join their efforts to promote reconciliation at national and local levels; ensure inclusive governance and impartial justice; fight impunity; and address the root causes of the Ivorian crisis. Looking ahead, the Council also sought to engage with UNOCI on its future, on the basis of the recommendations contained in the special report of the Security-General on UNOCI of 29 March 2012 (S/2012/186).

38. In Abidjan, the mission met with President Alassane Ouattara, the Prime Minister, Jeannot Kouadio-Ahoussou, and Government ministers, including the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, the Interior, Economy and Finance, Employment, Planning and Development, Human Rights, and Ex-Combatants, as well as the ministers in charge of Defence and Justice. The mission also met with the President of the National Assembly, Guillaume Soro, members of his Bureau and leaders of the parliamentary groups; representatives of the political opposition, including the former ruling FPI party; the President of the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Charles Konan Banny, and members of the Commission; representatives of civil society; as well as senior staff of UNOCI and the United Nations country team.

Meeting with the President

39. The President thanked the Security Council for its engagement in Côte d'Ivoire since 2004, in particular for the decisive action taken during the post-election crisis, which he said saved many lives. He provided the Council with an overview of efforts undertaken by his Government to stabilize the security situation and promote reconciliation as well as economic recovery. Reiterating his commitment to reconciliation, he noted that, in addition to establishing the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the Government had made numerous efforts to reach out to the former ruling political party and other opposition parties, particularly when forming the Government and in inviting the opposition political parties to a meeting to initiate political dialogue. He noted that

the Government would welcome the participation of the opposition parties in the local elections to be held by the end of 2012, adding that this would be an opportunity for them to participate in governance. The President also noted that his recent visit to western Côte d'Ivoire was aimed at promoting reconciliation in the area most affected by the recent crisis. Recognizing the need to address the root causes of conflict, in particular land tenure issues, the President noted that this issue was to be examined by the recently established National Assembly. In response to a question on how to balance justice and reconciliation, the President stressed that reconciliation must go hand in hand with justice. Noting that a system of equitable justice was in place to ensure that all perpetrators would be brought to justice irrespective of their political affiliation, he stated that the conditions posed by the former ruling party to release former President Laurent Gbagbo from detention were therefore unacceptable.

40. The President expressed concern about the security situation in border areas, in particular along the border with Liberia, recognizing that it was difficult to control this vast and densely forested area. He stated that, although collaboration between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia was excellent in this regard, the lack of appropriate transportation and communication and surveillance equipment had hampered the ability of the authorities to address border security challenges. He also expressed concern about potential destabilization from elements affiliated with former President Gbagbo, who had fled during and after the crisis to countries in the subregion, adding that international arrest warrants had been issued for some members of the former regime present in Ghana.

41. On security sector reform, the President recognized that integrating the two armies into the new national army was a challenging process, adding that the reunification had been accomplished although the forces lacked training and equipment, partly as a result of the sanctions regime. He recognized that security sector reform was a critical priority, emphasizing that he had taken this portfolio under his purview, while working closely with relevant ministers and heads of the security agencies. He expressed concern about the large number of former combatants and stressed the need for assistance to find solutions for some 50,000 young people who had taken up weapons during the post-elections crisis. He called for continued assistance for security sector reform and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration by the United Nations and bilateral partners, including through the creation of jobs and the provision of skills training, while also collecting the large number of weapons that remain in the country.

42. The President emphasized progress made towards reconstruction and economic development. He noted that by the end of June Côte d'Ivoire should be eligible for debt relief under the Enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. In spite of the economic growth of recent months, he noted that challenges remain and half of the population still lives below the poverty line. He identified job creation, especially for the youth, as well as reforms in the health and education sectors, as priorities for development. Noting the need for enhanced investment in Côte d'Ivoire, he expressed the hope that the United Nations would revise the security level classification for its personnel in the country, as this would serve as a positive reference for investors.

43. In his capacity as the Chair of ECOWAS, the President also provided an update on the situation in the subregion, including Mali and Guinea-Bissau where

coups d'état had been carried out since he had assumed his function in February 2012. He expressed particular concern about the situation in northern Mali, noting that terrorism and illicit trafficking constitute a serious threat to the subregion with far-reaching consequences. The President advised that ECOWAS was reflecting on measures to prevent coups d'état in the subregion, including through the creation of a regional electoral observation mechanism, as elections were identified as a major source of instability.

44. The Security Council mission was encouraged by the gradual improvement of the situation in Côte d'Ivoire since the violent post-elections crisis and the holding of legislative elections. The mission recognized a number of challenges the country is facing, including the security situation in the border areas; security sector reform; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration; and the balance between justice and reconciliation. The Council reaffirmed its continuing support, while noting the need for reviews of the peacekeeping operations and progressive adjustments as well as a gradual transition over time. In response to calls by the Ivorian authorities to lift the arms embargo, the mission clarified that the sanctions regime was not designed to prevent the Government from adequately equipping its security forces but to prevent the import of arms that could fall into the wrong hands, noting that it was easy to obtain exemptions for the Government to meet justified needs.

Meeting with the Prime Minister and Government ministers

45. The Prime Minister and Government ministers reflected on the main challenges Côte d'Ivoire is facing as a result of the post-elections crisis. Noting the collapse of State authority during the crisis, the Prime Minister stressed the need to rebuild a State that recognizes the rights of its citizens and ensures access to basic services, while reiterating the Government's determination to bring perpetrators to justice irrespective of their political affiliation.

46. The Minister of the Interior recognized that the security situation remained fragile, in particular along the border with Liberia, stressing the need for enhanced support from the United Nations to address cross-border movements of armed elements and weapons. He added that United Nations support remains critical for the reform of the security sector, in particular through the provision of training and equipment, as well as for the holding of local elections. The Minister of Defence identified the presence of political exiles in the subregion as a potential threat as well as the presence of large numbers of former combatants, some of whom had been integrated into the armed forces without training. The Minister for Foreign Affairs drew attention to displaced persons, including some 65,000 refugees in the subregion, noting that sustainable return remained a challenge. He also underlined the need to address subregional threats, including piracy and drug trafficking. The Minister for Planning and Development emphasized that economic recovery and improved access to basic services would accelerate reconciliation.

47. During the discussion, the Security Council commended the progress made since the end of the post-elections crisis and stressed the importance of concrete measures to make progress in the reform of security and rule of law institutions, national reconciliation and the restoration of State authority and to find solutions for the reintegration of former combatants.

Meeting with the National Assembly

48. The Security Council also met with the President of the newly-established National Assembly, members of its Bureau and leaders of the parliamentary groups. The President of the National Assembly reiterated the commitment of the Assembly to truly represent the Ivorian people and to build a strong and independent institution, while introducing some checks and balances on the Government and contributing to national reconciliation. During the discussion, the Council noted the need for the National Assembly to play a role in addressing national reconciliation, security sector reform and root causes of the conflict, particularly land ownership issues. The Council stressed the importance of the National Assembly's role in consolidating democracy in Côte d'Ivoire.

Meeting with the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission

49. The President of the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission noted that consultations would be held across the country to ensure the inclusiveness of the process and ownership by the population, while at the same time local commissions were being established to facilitate dialogue at the local level. He stressed that justice and reconciliation were two separate processes. He explained that the Commission would be seeking the truth and facilitating forgiveness, while the justice system would work in parallel to ensure that perpetrators of serious human rights violations would be held accountable. Noting that dialogue may not be sufficient to achieve reconciliation, he underlined the need for reparations for victims. During the discussion, the Security Council also stressed the need for real ownership of the process by the population as well as adequate documentation of the process.

Meeting with the political opposition

50. The meeting with representatives of political opposition parties illustrated the deep divisions that remain in Ivorian society, with representatives of the former ruling political party questioning the credibility of the elections and the Government's legitimacy. The main concerns raised by the representatives of the political opposition included partisan justice; acts of reprisals and attacks against them by elements of the armed forces, including illegal detention and torture; the lack of political space; and what they perceived as the lack of freedom of assembly and expression. They felt that the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission was ineffective, stating that they had no faith in it, while reiterating their conditions for participation in the process, including amnesty; the release of former President Gbagbo and other detainees associated with the former regime; the return of all persons from exile; the holding of new presidential, legislative and local elections; the disarmament of former combatants; the withdrawal of UNOCI; and the lifting of the sanctions regime. While participation in the local elections was categorically rejected by the former ruling party, some representatives indicated that they might consider participating.

Meeting with civil society

51. Representatives of civil society, including religious and traditional leaders, expressed concern about the continuing circulation of weapons and human rights violations committed by armed elements, including by the armed forces, and the

slow progress in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. They also deplored the lack of progress in national reconciliation. Some felt that this was due to the ineffectiveness of the Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, while others were of the view that it was the result of impunity. They also highlighted the need to address land tenure issues, which were identified as the main source of inter-community violence, including through a review of the relevant legislation. Concerns were also raised about gender-based violence and the lack of a comprehensive legal framework to protect women against all forms of violence, while the need for increased participation of women in national reconciliation, as well as in key reform and decision-making processes, was stressed.

Visit to western Côte d'Ivoire and eastern Liberia

Meeting with local authorities and representatives of the population in Guiglo

52. In Guiglo, the Security Council met with local authorities to discuss the situation in western Côte d'Ivoire. The large numbers of weapons and armed elements in the area were identified as major challenges, and it was noted that only six weapons had been collected in the area. Representatives of the law enforcement agencies noted the difficulty in addressing border security challenges owing to lack of capacity and adequate equipment. The prefect noted that, although most of the displaced persons in the area had returned, sustaining these returns was a challenge. He added that the local early warning and sensitization committee — comprising traditional leaders, local authorities, political parties and civil society — had commenced its work and produced initial results, while highlighting the need to reinforce its capacities. Representatives of the local population raised concerns about prevailing insecurity, the continuing presence of weapons, some of which are allegedly hidden in the border area, human rights violations committed by the armed forces and other armed elements, and lack of access to basic services. They called on UNOCI to enhance its efforts to protect civilians.

53. UNOCI briefed the Security Council on efforts under way to protect civilians in this volatile region, including through increasing its presence. The Mission has established new offices in the area along the border with Liberia, namely in Tai and Toulepleu, and is in the process of reinforcing its presence in Guiglo. UNOCI and the country team advised that they had also revised the system-wide strategy on protection of civilians to take into account the new realities on the ground and the specific needs of vulnerable groups, while optimizing the use of existing resources. UNOCI is also working with local security committees and supporting the activities of the early warning and sensitization committees in charge of prevention and management of local conflicts.

Visit to refugee camp in eastern Liberia

54. On 22 May, the Security Council travelled from Guiglo to eastern Liberia to visit the Prime Timber Production refugee camp located in Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County, in the vicinity of the Ivorian border. The Council was briefed by the Executive Director of the Liberia Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission and by a representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on the Ivorian refugee situation in the eastern part of Liberia. The camp is one of six camps established in eastern Liberia in 2011 to receive Ivorian refugees, housing 7,000 of the remaining 65,000 refugees. The

Council heard from refugee representatives and refugees themselves who shared their experiences, their hopes, and what they perceived as obstacles to their return to Côte d'Ivoire. Although the majority of Ivorian refugees have returned home, those that remained cited fear of persecution as well as land expropriation as reasons preventing their return to Côte d'Ivoire. It appeared that accurate, timely reporting on the situation from their homes could help to counteract rumours and inaccurate information that circulated within the camps. Some refugees said they would not return until President Ouattara was gone, if at all.

Inter-mission cooperation

55. Before leaving Zwedru, the Security Council delegation was briefed on inter-mission cooperation alongside the Liberian-Ivorian border. They noted the various security challenges that emerged following the Ivorian crisis, as well as the innovative joint steps the missions have taken to strengthen coordination and cooperation to better monitor the border situation, including through the sharing of assets, and to facilitate refugee repatriation. A joint security strategy for coordination, information-sharing and joint response has been developed by the two missions, while regular meetings are being held, bringing together UNMIL and UNOCI as well as national counterparts. They also mentioned the need to include civilian agencies in the strategy, devise ways to improve information-sharing and align messages, particularly regarding the humanitarian effort.

C. Meeting of the Security Council and the Economic Community of West African States

56. On 21 May 2012, the Security Council mission met with a high-level delegation of the Economic Community of West African States in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. This was the first such meeting between Council members and ECOWAS. Participants included the President of the ECOWAS Commission, Kadré Désiré Ouédraogo, the Foreign Ministers of Côte d'Ivoire (current Chair of ECOWAS), Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, the Gambia, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria and Senegal, as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, Said Djinnit, and the Secretary General of the Mano River Union, Hadja Saran Daraba Kabba. Benin also attended as the current Chair of the African Union. The in-depth discussions focused on the situations in Mali and Guinea-Bissau.

57. The Foreign Minister of Côte d'Ivoire described the institutional crisis that had stemmed from the coup d'état of 22 March in Mali. He recalled that plans for the Chair of ECOWAS to meet with the junta in the early stages of the crisis could not go forward, owing to events on the ground, which had led to the imposition of a range of economic, diplomatic and financial sanctions. Those measures had subsequently been lifted once a transition of power was agreed with the junta.

58. The President of the ECOWAS Commission added that the transitional institutions had been functioning until actions on the ground had led ECOWAS to believe that the conditions for the transition were not being observed, and the reimposition of sanctions had been threatened on 15 May. As at 20 May, there had been hope that all parties would agree to a 12-month period of transition with an interim president and institutions. The proposal that Captain Sanogo would enjoy the same benefits as a former Head of State of Mali had been proposed by the

Malian authorities as "the price of peace", but this had not been acceptable to ECOWAS. Several Security Council members agreed that conveying former Head of State status on Captain Sanogo would be "unsavoury", and would set a bad precedent.

59. In response to questions from Security Council members on recently unfolding events in Mali, the Foreign Minister of Burkina Faso reported that earlier on that same day groups of hostile and well organized demonstrators had gone to the presidential palace in Bamako, had crossed the security barriers, and had physically assaulted the interim President, Dioncounda Traoré, who had been taken to the hospital with a head wound.

60. Members of the Security Council and the representatives of ECOWAS and its member States subsequently held an exchange of views on the causes and meaning of the day's events in Mali, and discussed in detail various aspects of a proposed ECOWAS deployment force to restore peace and ensure the territorial integrity of Mali. The timing, tasks and modalities for deploying such a force were discussed, including whether it would be necessary to wait for an invitation from the Malian authorities, or for an endorsement by the Security Council, before deployment commenced.

61. Some ECOWAS speakers were of the view that the situation had worsened, including with that day's assault on the interim President, because an ECOWAS force had not yet deployed. In their view, firm measures were required to bring the situation under control both in Bamako and in northern Mali. A force of between 3,000 and 5,000 troops could be deployed, to help to re-establish security but also to train the Malian forces to bring them up to speed.

62. Some participants expressed support for finding ways to deploy the ECOWAS force in Mali even without a request from the authorities. Different cases from the past were recalled, including the intervention of forces of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group in Liberia, and the deployment of the African Union Mission in Somalia. Some speakers felt that the threat from terrorism in Mali provided legitimacy for a swift intervention. Several participants indicated that the Security Council would have a role to play in any military intervention, while others raised questions on the financing of the force, and wondered what logistics would be required to deploy it.

63. The Foreign Minister of Nigeria pointed out that there were sharp splits in civil society in Mali, including on the question of deploying an ECOWAS force, with those supporting the interim institutions in favour of the force, and Captain Sanogo and his supporters against its deployment.

64. Different strategies for negotiating with the various groups in northern Mali were discussed. While the importance of holding talks with the Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad regarding the return to constitutional order was acknowledged, some Council members expressed concern over the prospect of sitting at the same table with the terrorist groups Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Ansar Eddine. The Foreign Minister of Burkina Faso was of the view that Ansar Eddine would first have to break links with AQIM if it wanted a place at the negotiating table.

65. Various approaches to the crisis in Guinea-Bissau were discussed. The Foreign Minister of Nigeria recalled the provisions set out in the communiqué issued on 4 May 2012 by the ECOWAS Heads of State, whereby the elected speaker of the

National Assembly would assume the interim presidency, and would not stand in the next election. He added that African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC) had agreed to this approach, with the exception of the Carlos Gomes Júnior faction.

66. One member of the Security Council expressed the view that the current solution fell short of the objective of combating impunity, since the winner of the last legal election had been sent out of the country while the junta responsible sat at the bargaining table. The same speaker expressed concern that the majority party had been kept out of parliament, which could not commence its work for lack of a quorum.

67. Several speakers referred to the need to strengthen and improve coordination between ECOWAS, the Security Council and other relevant stakeholders, since all were seeking the same goal of a quick return to constitutional order. There was also broad agreement on the need for meaningful security sector reform in Guinea-Bissau, as well as the need to address drug trafficking in that country and in the region as a whole.

IV. Sierra Leone

A. Background and context

68. Prior to the departure of the mission to West Africa, the Security Council received an informal briefing on the political and security situation in Sierra Leone by the United Nations Secretariat.

69. The main objectives of the mission to Sierra Leone were to encourage continued efforts to consolidate peace and national reconciliation; assess the progress achieved by the national authorities and people of Sierra Leone in peacebuilding; and reaffirm the Council's support for the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) and the United Nations country team's contribution to the peacebuilding and development priorities of Sierra Leone.

70. The mission arrived in Sierra Leone on 23 May 2012, following visits to Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. In Freetown, the mission held extensive discussions with the newly arrived Executive Representative of the Secretary-General, senior officials of UNIPSIL and the United Nations country team. The forthcoming elections featured prominently during the Council's meetings with the President, Ernest Bai Koroma, and senior government officials, representatives of political parties, civil society including women's groups, security sector representatives, and members of the National Electoral Commission. The Council received a clear and welcome commitment from the President to a free, fair and transparent electoral process, and the Council encouraged the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNIPSIL to work closely with the Government to ensure that this commitment was adhered to. All political parties and the National Electoral Commission reassured the mission that good progress was being made in preparing for the elections to be held in November 2012.

B. Security Council mission

Meetings with UNIPSIL and the United Nations agencies

71. In accordance with its terms of reference, the mission met with UNIPSIL and the United Nations agencies to discuss the main priority areas for the United Nations in Sierra Leone, namely, supporting the Government's efforts in preparing for the elections; ensuring sustainable development; employment opportunities for the youth; addressing transnational organized crimes, including drug trafficking; as well as planning for the transition from UNIPSIL to a residual United Nations presence.

72. UNIPSIL briefed the mission on the latest political developments in Sierra Leone. The mission was informed that following 11 years of civil war, which ended in 2002, Sierra Leone has made remarkable progress not only towards creating a peaceful and democratic society, but also in initiating successful governance reforms and development strategies.

73. The current political environment in the country is dominated by the upcoming presidential, parliamentary and local council elections, which will be held on 17 November 2012. In the lead-up to the elections, isolated incidents of election-related violence and tension, mainly between supporters of the ruling All People's Congress (APC) and the major opposition party, the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), may increase. Political competition between SLPP and APC has also been heightened by the prospects of increased revenues from mining and the potential for exploitation of offshore oil. Notwithstanding the concerns about the potential for political violence during the upcoming elections, there has been increased dialogue involving the two parties, as well as other key stakeholders, over the past several months. However, there is more to be done in fostering dialogue between the presidential aspirants, particularly those from APC and SLPP. The two political parties have also participated in a joint fact-finding mission, set up by the President to investigate and resolve concerns raised by SLPP about the registration of Sierra Leoneans residing in neighbouring countries during the biometric voter registration process. Moreover, on 10 May 2012, the National Electoral Commission and SLPP held their first face-to-face meeting since the 2007 elections to address unresolved concerns raised by SLPP during the last general elections. The meeting was facilitated by UNIPSIL.

74. While the political environment in the country continues to be dominated by the traditional rivalry and mistrust between the two major political parties, the Security Council mission was particularly encouraged by the signing on 18 May 2012 of the Declaration on the 2012 elections by all major national stakeholders, including the 10 registered political parties. When the Council met with the political parties, there was some doubt as to whether SLPP had signed the Declaration. However, at the end of the meeting its representatives confirmed that they had signed the Declaration and would adhere to it. The Declaration sets out the ground rules for the smooth and peaceful conduct of the elections, by clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of each major stakeholder in the electoral process. The mission underlined the need for full implementation of the commitments made by the signatories in the Declaration.

75. There are positive prospects for socioeconomic development in the country, primarily as a result of the exploitation of the country's newly discovered natural

resources, notably minerals such as iron ore. The potentials of the country's agriculture and tourism sectors also need to be harnessed. Despite Sierra Leone's abundant natural resources, unemployment, in particular youth unemployment, remains among the highest in the West African subregion, standing at 60 per cent.

76. The Government issued its response, a white paper, almost two years after the report of the Shears-Moses Commission of Inquiry was presented to President Koroma, and the recommendations have not been fully implemented to date. The implementation of the remaining key recommendations, particularly those relating to actions against those responsible for the violence in 2009, is critical.

77. Efforts of the United Nations on the ground will continue to be led and coordinated by UNIPSIL, which began its operations on 1 October 2008. Pending the successful and acceptable outcome of the elections, as well as the Security Council's decision on the transition of the United Nations presence in Sierra Leone, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1829 (2008) UNIPSIL will continue to implement its mandate to support the Government of Sierra Leone in the areas of conflict prevention and mitigation; fostering political dialogue; and promoting good governance, the rule of law and human rights.

Meeting with the President and Government representatives

78. During the mission's meeting with the President and Government representatives, the President and members of his Cabinet presented the views of the Government on the matters covered by the terms of reference of the mission. The political aim of the Government was to build a peaceful and democratic country, with a vision of full economic and development self-reliance in the long term. To achieve these aims, the President reiterated the Government's commitment to maintain the existing excellent relationship with the United Nations, while emphasizing the need for continued support from the Organization even after the successful holding of elections.

79. Reiterating the Government's primary responsibility for ensuring peaceful elections, the President affirmed that preparations for the elections had reached an advanced stage, with relevant national and local institutions, in particular the National Electoral Commission and the Political Parties Registration Commission, playing a lead role. However, currently lacking a Chair, the Registration Commission may struggle to fill its mandate for the 2012 elections. The voter registration exercise with the newly introduced biometric system was able to ease considerable tension in the country, as it was successfully completed on 25 March 2012, with about 2.7 million people registered. The mission was encouraged by the assurances of the President about his commitment to gender equality, in particular the political participation of women through the allocation of a minimum 30 per cent quota for women in Cabinet positions and the enactment of a gender equality bill by Parliament. As to the country's development strategy, the mission was informed that the Government's current Agenda for Change will evolve into an Agenda for Prosperity, covering the period from 2013 to 2017. The mission was encouraged that the Government had voluntarily opted in to a review by the African Peer Review Mechanism.

80. Regarding the concerns raised about the purchase of weapons worth $4.9 million for use by the armed division of the Sierra Leone police, the Government confirmed that it had transferred, in the presence of international

observers, most of the heavy weapons purchased to the Republic of Sierra Leone armed forces.

81. One of the achievements of post-conflict Sierra Leone is the existence of a free and diverse media. However, stricter adherence to the code of conduct for the media and its enforcement by the Independent Media Commission is required. The Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation, which was inaugurated jointly by the United Nations Secretary-General and President Koroma in June 2010, will have an important role to play during the elections by providing equitable access to all political parties despite its internal administrative and financial difficulties.

Meeting with security institutions (Office of National Security, Republic of Sierra Leone armed forces and Sierra Leone police)

82. The mission was briefed by the security institutions. In order to consolidate the gains that have been made in strengthening democracy and fostering peace and development, the security sector must adequately plan and prepare for the upcoming elections. There are indications that security threats are likely to be as challenging leading up to and after the 2012 elections as they were for the 2007 elections. In response, the security sector has developed an integrated strategy to provide the framework for cooperation and effective resource management for the elections. The National Security Council Coordinating Group is the central security coordinating mechanism for the 2012 elections, which brings together all the country's security structures.

83. The mission noted in particular the critical role of the Sierra Leone police in providing security during the electoral period. The mission underlined the need for the police to remain independent and impartial and operate in line with principles of democratic governance and accountability towards human rights and the rule of law. The mission drew attention to the responsibilities of Sierra Leone's security agencies to respond proportionately to threats to the security of all citizens without resorting to lethal force, and encouraged the early establishment of the independent police complaints board. With support from UNIPSIL, 10,500 personnel of various security institutions were given election-specific training, including in public order management.

84. The mission was encouraged by Sierra Leone's participation in international peace operations. The Sierra Leone police have deployed over 260 peacekeepers to United Nations peacekeeping operations in Haiti, Somalia and the Sudan. The Sierra Leone Government also informed the mission about the ongoing deployment to the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) and the forthcoming deployment of elements of their armed forces as peacekeepers to AMISOM. Despite these efforts, challenges remain, including inadequate resources to meet the management and operational needs of the security forces.

Meeting with political parties

85. The mission met with political parties. The parties expressed their willingness to work towards ensuring a free, fair and transparent electoral process. The Council commended the political parties on the signing of the Declaration on the 2012 elections in which the parties, together with electoral management bodies, the Government, traditional leaders, media, women and youth groups, the Human Rights Commission, the Independent Media Commission, the National Commission

for Democracy and other national stakeholders committed themselves to political tolerance and to work together for the common good. The Declaration also outlines the specific responsibilities and obligations of the signatories. The commitments to peaceful elections and increased participation of women were positive.

Meeting with the National Electoral Commission, the Independent Media Commission, the Political Parties Registration Commission and the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation

86. The mission was briefed by the National Electoral Commission, the Independent Media Commission, the Political Parties Registration Commission and the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation. The National Electoral Commission informed the mission that the election process is on track despite the tense political atmosphere among the political parties. The mission was informed that on 5 May 2012 Parliament approved the Public Elections Law, which is aimed at addressing gaps and inconsistencies in existing legislation and will consolidate all electoral legislation into a single text. It also contains provisions granting the Commission the power to nullify votes and provides that if the nullification affects the outcome of an election that there will be a rerun. The mission was also advised that the Constitution of Sierra Leone provides for the creation of the Electoral Offences Courts. In terms of electoral timelines, the exhibition of the provisional voter register is planned from 30 June to 4 July 2012 and the final voter register is expected to be printed and gazetted from 21 August to 6 September 2012. The Electoral Commission and the other election management bodies meeting the mission stated that the assistance received from the United Nations, the international community and the Government in preparation for the elections was appreciated.

Meeting with members of civil society, including women's groups

87. The United Kingdom High Commissioner hosted a lunch for the Council at his residence. Attending the lunch were representatives of civil society — National Election Watch, the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone and AdvocAid — as well as the diplomatic community, including a representative of the International Military Assistance Training Team.

88. Also attending the lunch were representatives of the following women's groups: Mano River Women Peace Network, National Organisation for Women, African Kind Hearts, Campaign for Good Governance, Women's Solidarity Support Group and Women in the Security Sector. During the lunch these representatives made a presentation to Council members. They discussed their ideas about peacebuilding and reconciliation, including the question of reparations for war victims. All speakers stressed the important role of women in providing early warning for potential conflict and spoke in favour of greater representation of women in parliament. The women representatives highlighted the progress being made and the remaining challenges to the advancement of women, including in promoting their political participation in the forthcoming elections.

Wrap-up meeting with the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General

89. The final session was a wrap-up meeting with the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNIPSIL, Jens Toyberg-Frandzen. The Council encouraged the Executive Representative to report to the Council any increases in

tension or major developments, particularly in the light of the forthcoming elections, so that there were no major surprises. The Council also encouraged the Executive Representative to use his good offices to ensure that the commitments the President and his Government made to the Security Council mission would be fully implemented.

C. Conclusions and recommendations

90. It is the mission's view that the country has made significant progress in post-conflict reconstruction, peace consolidation and peacebuilding efforts. The mission commends the Government for the progress made and for its positive steps in consolidating peace and in promoting a comprehensive development agenda. As the political situation in the country is dominated by preparations for the presidential, parliamentary and local council elections, which are scheduled for 17 November 2012, the Government should continue its efforts to ensure free, fair and peaceful elections in 2012 and engage in dialogue with all stakeholders.

91. Sierra Leone is on the path to building a lasting peace. However, every effort must be made to continue addressing a number of remaining challenges, including (a) encouraging national reconciliation and promoting broad and inclusive internal political dialogue; (b) strengthening national public institutions; (c) ensuring the neutrality of the security sector institutions; (d) promoting national unity and cohesion through the media; (e) managing natural resources while redressing social and economic inequities; (f) creating economic opportunities to address high youth unemployment; and (g) mobilizing internal and external resources, from bilateral and multilateral sources, to promote social and economic development. The mission urges continued international support for the successful accomplishment of these goals.

92. The mission recommends:

(a) The Government should continue its efforts to strengthen a culture of good governance, democracy and respect for the rule of law and human rights, including through institutional capacity-building, with the support of international partners;

(b) The Government should respond to the remaining key recommendations in the report of the Shears-Moses Commission of Inquiry, in particular those relating to actions against those responsible for the violence in 2009, while ensuring continued prosecution of all persons responsible for political violence, provide a level playing field for all political contestants and guarantee the independence of democratic and State institutions. The Government should also respond to the Kelvin Lewis report into the violence in Bo in September 2011;

(c) The National Electoral Commission should continue to strengthen its technical expertise to ensure that the elections are credible. The Commission should also continue to work closely with all stakeholders and address any electoral concerns through dialogue. In this regard, the Political Parties Registration Commission, in accordance with its mandate, should play a lead role in convening regular meetings with the political parties to ensure ongoing dialogue about electoral issues and the Government should ensure that a new Chair is swiftly found for this organization;

(d) All political parties are encouraged to take ownership of the electoral process, continue constructive engagement and dialogue, refrain from political violence and intolerance and increase the participation of women in politics. Candidates should collectively take a public lead against political intimidation or violence;

(e) The security sector should remain independent, professional and adequately equipped to enable it to transparently, proportionately and effectively carry out its functions within the rule of law;

(f) The Independent Media Commission should proactively monitor the media and ensure compliance with the code of conduct for the media;

(g) The national authorities should, with international support and assistance, urgently address the administrative and financial challenges facing the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation;

(h) The Government should continue to implement its commitment to promoting gender equality and the advancement of women, including through the allocation of a minimum 30 per cent quota for women in Cabinet and other senior Government positions;

(i) Development partners and the donor community, including the Bretton Woods institutions, should respond generously to the positive steps taken by the Government by providing both financial resources and technical assistance to assist the country in achieving its short-, medium- and long-term development goals;

(j) The Economic Community of West African States and the Mano River Union should, working closely with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, intensify efforts to consolidate regional peace and security, including through tackling the challenges posed by drug trafficking and transnational organized crime, proliferation of small arms and other security threats in the subregion;

(k) The Government should maintain and strengthen the existing excellent working relationship with UNIPSIL and the United Nations country team to ensure the effective implementation of the UNIPSIL mandate.

93. As the Council will remain actively seized of the matter, it encourages UNIPSIL to continue to report, through the Secretary-General, on the situation in Sierra Leone, including on the country's progress in preparing for the 2012 elections, promoting national dialogue and supporting key national institutions in the consolidation of peace and democratic governance. The mission commends the United Nations integrated approach, which has been successfully implemented in the country for over 10 years, and encourages UNIPSIL and the United Nations country team to continue to work closely together in an integrated manner, particularly as plans are being made for the transition of the United Nations presence.

94. The Council encourages the Sierra Leone configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission to work closely with the new Executive Representative of the Secretary-General to engage with the Government at a senior level to support progress on critical peacebuilding tasks, such as political dialogue and reconciliation.

95. The mission would like to record its deep appreciation for the efforts of the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for Sierra Leone, Jens Anders Toyberg-Frandzen, as well as the staff of UNIPSIL and United Nations agencies in the country who have been working in support of peace and development in Sierra Leone. It would also like to thank all the members of the Secretariat who accompanied the mission for their vital role in ensuring its success.